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United Nations

Report of the Preparatory Committee for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations

General Assembly
Official Records • Forty-eighth Session
Supplement No. 48 (A/48/48)

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NOTE

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I. BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

1. At the 76th plenary meeting of its forty-sixth session, on 17 December 1991, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the General Committee, to include in the agenda of its forty-sixth session an item entitled "Commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations in 1995".

2. At its 84th plenary meeting, on 13 April 1992, the General Assembly adopted decision 46/472, by which it decided: (a) to establish a Preparatory Committee for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations, consisting of the members of the General Committee and open to the participation of all Member States; and (b) to entrust the Preparatory Committee with the task of considering and recommending to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session proposals for suitable activities in connection with the observance of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, on the understanding that its decisions would be taken by consensus.

3. On 8 December 1992, the General Assembly considered the first report of the Preparatory Committee for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations submitted to it on 3 December 1992 (A/47/48). In its decision 47/417 of 8 December 1992, the Assembly took note of the work of the Committee in 1992 and decided that the Preparatory Committee should continue its work and report to the Assembly at its forty-eighth session. The present report is submitted in response to that decision.

4. Since the submission of the previous report, the Preparatory Committee has held five meetings: the 3rd meeting on 22 February 1993, the 4th on 16 March 1993, the 5th on 23 April 1993, the 6th on 20 May 1993 and the 7th on 8 June 1993.

5. At its 3rd meeting, on 22 February 1993, the Committee had before it a note by the Chairman (A/AC.240/1993/L.4), which elaborated upon the organization of the work of the Committee, as well as the substantive issues requiring its consideration. The note was considered a useful basis for the further deliberations of the Committee. It was updated in the draft annotated agenda (A/AC.240/1993/L.5), which was approved by the Committee at its 4th meeting on 16 March 1993. (The complete list of documents before the Committee is annexed to the present report.)

II. SUBSTANTIVE MATTERS CONSIDERED BY THE COMMITTEE

A. Organizing principles

6. At its 3rd and 4th meetings in 1993, the Committee gave consideration to basic principles to be applied in the organization of the fiftieth anniversary. In that context, members of the Committee agreed that: (a) United Nations activities in connection with the fiftieth anniversary should, to the extent possible, be universal in character in keeping with the universality of the membership of the United Nations; (b) there should be a clear allocation of functions/activities between the United Nations system and Member States in order to ensure that duplication was avoided and that the actions taken were consistent and coherent; (c) a suitable climax to the fiftieth anniversary would need to be identified, which should have universal importance, be enduring in its effect and have a suitable symbolic value; and (d) activities should be conducted in and made available in all the official languages.

B. Theme

7. During the reporting period, the Committee devoted a considerable amount of effort to reaching agreement on the theme for the fiftieth anniversary. The common focus of the proposals made was the Charter of the United Nations and the fundamental concepts that it expressed. It was also stressed that the theme should be forward-looking and widely relevant. Although the theme proposed by the Secretary-General, "We the peoples", received considerable support from delegations, the majority view was that it needed to be extended and made more specific. Following extensive deliberations, a consensus was reached in the Committee on "We the Peoples of the United Nations ... United for a Better World" as an appropriate expression of the theme of the fiftieth anniversary.

C. Preparation of a declaration and establishment of a drafting group

8. At the 4th meeting of the Committee, on 16 March 1993, it was proposed that an open-ended drafting group be established to prepare a solemn declaration to mark the observance of the anniversary in 1995. The declaration to be drafted should reaffirm adherence by Member States to the principles of the Charter and guide the Organization's work for the future. That proposal was adopted without dissent. There were differences of opinion, however, on when the drafting group should begin its work. Some representatives stated that it would be premature to begin work on a text at that early stage, when it might be overtaken by events and have to be revised two years later. Others stated that work should begin immediately, as time was needed to reflect on the elements to be included in the declaration. Following discussion and on the recommendation of the Chairman of the Committee, it was agreed that the work of the drafting group would take place in two phases: consideration of conceptual issues, to be followed by drafting at a later stage. As a result, the 1st meeting of the open-ended drafting group was held on 22 June 1993, when the conceptual framework for the declaration was discussed.

D. Action by Member States, including the establishment of national committees

9. The note by the Chairman of 16 February 1993 (A/AC.240/1993/L.4) referred to the note verbale sent by the Secretary-General to all Permanent Representatives to the United Nations on 3 February 1993, drawing attention to the importance of establishing national committees for the fiftieth anniversary to provide a channel for each country's activities with regard to the anniversary.

10. To date, the Secretary-General has received information from 13 Member States in which national committees have been established: Argentina, Canada, China, Cuba, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Philippines, Sudan, Ukraine and Yemen. In addition, 14 Member States have expressed their intention to establish a national committee (Australia, Austria, Belgium, Chile, Germany, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Israel, Italy, Myanmar, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America). The Committee congratulates and encourages the above-mentioned Member States and hopes that others will soon establish national committees.

E. Commemorative programmes and activities

11. Following a request by the Committee, the secretariat had prepared a conference room paper entitled "Status of the commemorative programme". The secretariat had noted that, while previous anniversaries in the Organization had served primarily two purposes, to provide for the evaluation of past achievements and shortcomings and to promote a ceremonial recommitment to the Charter of the United Nations, it was hoped that the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary would, in addition, effectively reposition the United Nations in the minds of its various constituencies and demonstrate its continuing relevance as the next century approached. To that end, the secretariat had also compiled a list of proposed events and activities aimed at fostering projects with a global component and outreach that were awaiting funding. That list was divided into three main categories: (a) communication/education projects that would promote awareness of the history, structure and functions of the United Nations, increase grass-roots support of the Organization, improve world-wide education about it and highlight the full range of issues on the Organization's agenda; (b) commemorative projects that would review the past achievements of the United Nations with a view to promoting its future; and (c) celebratory events. The Committee was also informed that the secretariat had already reviewed and evaluated approximately 180 unsolicited proposals. Some of those that had met key criteria for evaluation (particularly the extent to which a project furthered the purposes of the United Nations, educated and informed the public, and was self-funding) were in development. As much of the programme was still in the planning stage and few national programmes had been initiated, it was, however, considered premature to discuss in detail a calendar of events for 1995.

F. Activities within the United Nations system

12. The Committee noted that the Secretary-General attached great significance to the system-wide nature of the anniversary, particularly since several of the specialized agencies and other organs would celebrate their own anniversaries in or around 1995. It was agreed that, within the context of the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary, an extraordinary opportunity existed to highlight the

mutually reinforcing goals of the United Nations and its sister organizations. It was noted that those issues were being coordinated through the Administrative Committee on Coordination and focal points at the working level. The Committee expressed its continuing interest in that important aspect of the commemoration and requested that it be kept informed of further developments in that regard.

G. Role of non-governmental organizations

13. In the context of its deliberations, the Committee agreed that the fiftieth anniversary should be a broad-based and popular commemoration. It was, therefore, agreed to encourage the participation of non-governmental organizations to the greatest extent possible, both at the national level and in global events. They would provide valuable communication and information networks for the fiftieth anniversary as links between the United Nations and its world-wide constituencies. The Committee further agreed that non-governmental organizations could participate in its meetings under the rules governing their participation in the work of the Economic and Social Council.

H. Financial and administrative issues

14. The Committee was informed that the financial situation of the Organization precluded making funds from the regular budget available for financing fiftieth anniversary commemorative programmes and events. The Secretary-General therefore established a Trust Fund for the Fiftieth Anniversary Celebrations for that purpose, and urged the Member States to support that initiative. Support was also being sought from the private sector, including a limited number of global sponsors and international licensees.

15. In addition to funding for commemorative programmes, the need for adequate secretariat support was discussed by the Committee at several meetings. The Committee agreed that it was essential to the effective functioning and proper management of the fiftieth anniversary that its secretariat be assured of adequate staff and related resources. It requested the Chairman of the Committee to raise that concern with the Secretary-General, as appropriate.

III. RECOMMENDATION OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE

16. The Preparatory Committee for the fiftieth anniversary recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft decision:

The General Assembly,

Having considered the report of the Preparatory Committee for the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations,

Takes note of the work of the Preparatory Committee for the fiftieth anniversary in 1993, including the decision that the theme for the commemoration be "We the Peoples of the United Nations ... United for a Better World" and that an open-ended drafting group be established to prepare a declaration to be adopted in 1995 to mark the anniversary,

Decides that the Preparatory Committee should continue its work and report thereon to the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session.

Annex

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

A/AC.240/1993/L.4	Report on the preparations for the fiftieth anniversary - Note by the Chairman
A/AC.240/1993/L.5	Draft annotated agenda for the 4th meeting of the Preparatory Committee
A/AC.240/1993/L.6	Draft provisional agenda for the 6th meeting of the Preparatory Committee
A/AC.240/1993/L.7	Draft provisional agenda for the 7th meeting of the Preparatory Committee

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